

Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Committee
MINUTES
June 18, 2014

Location: Doyle Conservation Center, Leominster MA

Time: 4pm to 6pm

Members Present:

Bill Boles: Mountain Biking

Benton Phelps: ATV

Becky Kalagher: Equestrian

Larry Tucker: Snowmobiles

Dick O'Brien: Community Trail and Greenways

Dick Williamson: Rail Trails

Pam Browning: Paddling

Michele Biscoe: Dog-walking

Bill Riordan: Off-Road Motorcycling

Amanda Lewis: Recreational Trails Program Coordinator

Alternates Present:

A. Richard Miller: Rail Trails

Recreational Trails Program Update

- Amanda updated MARTAB on the status of RTP grant rounds – 2013 contracts have been awarded and 2014 round of grants are going through NEPA and Section 106 compliance process through FHWA as well as gaining approvals from Governor's office.
- Environmental Bond Bill Update: The current version of the environmental bond, which passed the House, includes \$5 million for recreational trails grants. Although this isn't the full \$10 million that we originally sought, this is very good, especially since it's an entirely new line in the environmental bond. The bond bill is now at the Senate Bonding Committee. It's expected to be a 4-5 year bond. The conservation organizations that spend a lot of time in the state house and work heavily on the environmental bond have this included in their list of priorities.
- Other Trails Updates:
 - Gary Briere is retiring
 - Governor made excellent speech on the importance of trails at an opening ceremony along the Cochituate Rail Trail in Framingham on or around May 7th. He should be invited to speak at the trails conference, possibly asking Senator Brewer to invite him, hopefully bringing a similar speech with him.
- MARTAB Meeting Dates:
Wednesday, September 24th (4-6pm, location TBD)

Wednesday, January 14th (7-9pm, Teleconference)
Saturday, February 28th (9-5, location TBD) Executive Session
Wednesday, June 17th (4-6pm – location TBD)

Follow-up: Amanda will send out emails for MARTAB meeting dates and a new contact list with updates made at the meeting. Dick will reach out to Senator Brewer to invite the Governor to speak at the Trails Conference.

MARTAB Board Membership

- Amanda passed out an updated list of terms. Bill Boles is the only member with a term that is up for renewal (going into his second term). Amanda will send him a nomination form and he should have that filled out and sent back by NEMBA. Official vote will take place in October.
- Dick informed the group that he will step down as Chair this year (it is a position voted on annually). Bill Boles said that he can stay Vice Chair, but will not look to become Chair.

Follow-up: Amanda will update contact list and send out to everyone. MARTAB members who would like to be considered for chair or vice chair should let Amanda know before the next meeting. Amanda found a nomination form for Bill Boles submitted last year at the summer meeting and notes indicating the nomination form was discussed. However, the vote for nominations was tabled at the meeting and Bill's term vote did not take place at the next meeting either. At the next MARTAB meeting, a vote for Bill Boles' second term will take place and the term will commence at that time.

MA Trails Conference

- The venue has been selected and agreement has been signed: DoubleTree by Hilton in Leominster for November 8th –put on your calendars!!!
- Janet Zeller is signed on as keynote speaker
- Group will look to invite DCR Commissioner, Secretary of EOEEA, Governor and Legislators once schedule is finalized (in draft form at least)
- Dick has looked into field trips and will start planning those. Possible field trips for trail work include wetland crossings, building a sustainable trail.
- Dog workshops – contact Richard Windish again (can only speak before lunch)
- Discussion of Rail Trail session. What is rail trail hot topic now? Possibly have round table with 4 different discussion items:
 1. Getting railroad to talk to groups
 2. Trail surface
 3. CPA funding issue (Sudbury)David Shedd from MassDOT works on Bruce Freeman Trail and may be good presenter

- Another possible Rail Trail workshop – bridges and tunnels (where are old bridges from MassDOT projects, how to get them, tunnel challenges, etc)
- Town Trail Vision workshop – this idea was discussed and may be a good workshop at the conference – could also be an appropriate use of education funds (having groups submit grant proposals for putting together and hosting trail visions workshops across the state, which could then contribute to the first steps of the Commonwealth Connections Trail Vision)
- Motorized Workshop – Bill and Ben urged the need for a workshop to describe the status of the OHV fine filter process, OHV funds and legal riding opportunities in the state. Stephanie Cooper could be contacted for information on this and Bill Riordan will reach out to her.
- Utility line rights of way – trails on these? GEIR study recommended that utility corridors be open for recreational use. Company's issue is liability and insurance – they require that the public provide liability coverage to ride/walk on trails and this requires a large sum of money.

*Follow-up: Dick Miller will provide a write-up of bridges and tunnels workshop. Bill Riordan will contact Stephanie about the conference and discuss a possible OHV session with her. Dick and Amanda will commence with conference planning and convene a conference planning conference call in the near future. Dick Williamson will come up with four hot topic questions for a rail trail session and possible panel members. **Please submit assigned conference information to Amanda and Dick via email by July 11th.***

2015 Grant Round Changes

- Eligible vs. Ineligible projects – from the MARTAB discussion, the attached document is a draft of the language that will be posted on the RTP website clarifying the RTP regulations with regards to projects with planning components. MARTAB discussed this document in draft form, suggested changes which are reflected here. The regulations stipulate that it is the responsibility of the state to determine the extent to which planning can be a part of an overall project (presumably on a case-by-case basis), as long as it is a “relatively small portion of the overall trail project” (taken from regulations) or that the project is not proposed “solely for the purpose of planning”. For the purpose of clarity, MARTAB decided at the last review meeting to define this planning threshold more clearly as an across-the-board rule for those applying for RTP funds. This will provide for a more seamless review process as well as a good source of clarity for the potential applicants.
 - Debate over the percentage of a project that can be classified as planning, defined in the attached document, went from 5% to 75%. It was determined that RTP projects will not be awarded if more than 25% of the federal portion of the project is for planning purposes. Amanda has amended this to state that 25% of the overall project is permitted to be defined as planning, which is much less confusing. MARTAB will review the attached document and

provide comments. This information will then be posted on the web to clarify the planning question.

- Although it was agreed that it is permissible to award RTP funds to a project that is solely for 25% design following MassDOT specifications (falls under construction and engineering activities in the RTP regulations) there were concerns that this would sometimes allow for feasibility studies and conceptual design to be paid for, which is not within the construction and engineering category of permissible use of funds, stated in the RTP regulations. MARTAB agreed that, should a project submit for funding to achieve 25% design, they must provide the feasibility/conceptual study in the RTP application. Failure to do so will disqualify the project for funding. This will ensure that project proponents do not misunderstand the intent of the funding and/or do not intentional misdirect the RTP reviewers with language that appears to be engineering goals but is in fact a feasibility study or conceptual design document. It was acknowledged that 25% design typically is a complete set of engineering plans, ready to be presented for public review as a draft document. Therefore, it may be best to word this kind of situation as “the creation of a complete set of (draft?) engineering plans for a trail are a permissible use of funds, while feasibility studies and conceptual design documents are not”. This has been included in the attached document.

Follow-up: MARTAB will review the wording for eligible and ineligible projects and discuss. Upon general approval of this wording, this information will be posted on the RTP website, simply to clarify the existing regulations.